

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 6-12 (B) – Mark 12: 38-44

Living in Christ: *Give*

Focus Question: *How did Christ exemplify a giving spirit?*

word of life

“But she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” Mark 12:44 (NRSV)

Read Mark 12:38-44

Jesus does not hesitate to use the lives of others as examples to teach his disciples. He warns his followers not to be like the scribes and those in religious authority who reflect false piety. Specifically, they wear long robes so people will treat them with respect. They need the best seats and take advantage of the widows. Throughout it all, these religious leaders utter long prayers, unable to identify the disconnection between their prayers and actions.

1. *How would you describe these religious leaders?*
2. *What are the disciples disconnected from?*
3. *What is Jesus hoping for his disciples?*

Take a moment to skim the parallel passage in Matthew 23:1-36. This extensive list of woes challenges the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus seems to have little patience for those who teach justice and compassion but give so little.

4. *Why does Jesus take any time dealing with the issue of hypocrisy?*
5. *What would it mean to follow the example of the scribes?*

The treatment of widows was a good test of how justice was lived out in a community. Without a husband, the widow in Jesus' day had no means of income and relied on the compassion of others. There were no pensions or savings accounts to assist widows. It was bad enough to ignore the widows, but Jesus describes the scribes as actively harming them. His words are strong as he portrays the scribes as ones who “devour widows' houses.”

6. *What might it mean to “devour widows' houses”?*
7. *Give a contemporary example of this.*
8. *Why is important to care for the widow?*

Jesus proceeds to watch the people put money into the treasury. Some of the rich put in large sums. Jesus points to a widow who places in two copper coins worth a penny. Just a penny! Why get excited about a penny? Notice the irony of selecting a widow as a prime example of giving. Perhaps it is not irony but simply the way Jesus chooses to teach.

9. *How difficult is it for the rich to give?*
10. *Compare the difficulty of giving between the rich and poor.*
11. *Is it a fair comparison? How so?*

In the story of Jesus, the rich gave out of their surplus while the widow gave out of her poverty. In fact, she put everything she had into the treasury.

12. *Why would she give it all away?*
13. *How do you imagine she continued to live?*

word among us

The employers gathered in the fourth floor meeting room to brainstorm about helping the community during the coming Christmas season. No one was surprised when Agnes raised her hand and spoke first. Each year, Agnes came ready, overflowing with ways to reach out to those in need. Her giving spirit was inspiring. This year, she passionately suggested food baskets and Christmas gifts for needy families with children.

Tears filled the eyes of those in that room. Each employer knew Agnes' story. In the spring, her house caught on fire destroying all her possessions and her youngest child was badly burned. As a single mother, she was slowly rebuilding her life after the tragedy. As the employees listened to Agnes, they knew this was so typical of her, ready to lead the charge and give all she had to help others. A few of the employees began to catch the eyes of each other. They knew without saying a word, they would secretly gather food and Christmas gifts for Agnes and her family, giving them a Christmas they would not forget.

1. *What might we learn from Agnes?*
2. *How can people who have so little give so much?*
3. *How can we keep the giving spirit alive throughout the year and not just at the holidays?*

Jesus desired the disciples to not just talk about care, love, and compassion, but to demonstrate their faith through tangible acts of giving. He didn't mean for his followers to give money, time, or possessions only when it was easy or convenient.

4. *How does a disciple develop a giving spirit?*
5. *Take a moment and squeeze your hands together. Now open them. Describe that sensation. How does the opening of your hands relate to this story?*

The widow gave with a willing, joyful spirit. Her action demonstrated a deep trust in the Giver. She did not seem embarrassed about such a small gift, nor did it prevent her from giving. She gave out of her faith.

6. *What is the message in the widow's gift?*
7. *What happens to us as we give freely?*
8. *What tips would you give someone who is hesitant to part with money?*

Most people don't wake up with giving hearts. Most learn from watching others. Some people reflect great joy as they give of their time, talents and treasury.

9. *How would you describe your giving patterns?*
10. *How do you decide what to give to the work of the church?*
11. *How might we support others in giving?*

Prayer

Holy Spirit, open our hearts so we might more freely give. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 23:1-36

last word

Throughout the day, open
and close your hands
as you pray for Jesus
to open your life to be more giving.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

Nov. 6-12 (B) Page 2 of 2